

Local Development Plan Catterline Community Working Group

Introduction

At the Catterline, Kinneff & Dunnottar Community Council meeting held on 27th January, the meeting heard that developers and landowners have submitted proposal for areas to be developed as part of the next Local Development Plan (LDP). Community Councils have now been asked to contribute any areas that they would like to be included, as well as those they wish to see protected. It was explained that these suggestions, along with the developers' proposals, will be included in the Main Issues Report to be published in May, at which point there will be public consultation on the merits of all proposals. During the Community Council meeting it was agreed to set up a working group to discuss the LDP further. The first meeting of this group was held in the Creel Inn on Monday 2nd February 2009 at 8.00pm and was very well attended, with many residents from Catterline coming along to find out more about the recent bids for inclusion in the LDP.

Current Objectives

At this stage in the process the focus is to identify any sites the community wishes to see highlighted for a particular purpose and any sites they wish to see protected from development.

Outcomes

The outcome of the meeting held at the Creel Inn on Monday 2nd February can be summarised as follows:

1. Areas suggested for particular use by the community – none
2. Areas which the community wishes to see protected from development:
The community expressed an overarching desire to see the current Conservation Area protected from development i.e. no development within the boundaries of the Conservation Area. Specific areas were addressed as follows:
 - a. The Reath (identified as K92 on the LDP Proposals Map)
This area is special by location to the village as it borders the historic fisher cottages known as 'South Row'.
 - b. Field opposite Burnside cottages (identified as K147 on the LDP Proposals Map)
A defining feature of the village is the view across the Catterline burn to the west, a feature the community wish to see protected.
 - c. Field adjacent to Trelong Row (identified as K91 on the LDP Proposals Map)
Views to the north of the village are a special feature and the community expressed that the field adjacent to Trelong row be marked as 'protected from development'. A unique facility the village provides is the artists retreat known as the 'Watchie'. A characteristic of the Watchie is its seclusion from, yet its closeness to the village and development adjacent to or overlooking the artists retreat would undermine this.

Catterline Residents' meeting to discuss Development Plans, The Creel Inn, Catterline, 2nd February 2009

The Chairperson (**Stephen Johnson**) introduced the meeting by explaining the context, and suggesting that the purpose of the current meeting would be to give a response to the proposals submitted to Aberdeenshire Council which related to Catterline.

Stephen Hall clarified the position relative to the sequence of key events such as submission of proposals and the consultation period. Aberdeenshire Council had invited submissions for consideration in the Authority's future Development Plan. The closing date for these submissions had been 6th November 2008. All received, would be included in the main 'Issues Report' which will be published in May 2009, following which there would be consultation on all submissions. He stressed that the submissions *were not* planning applications. Aberdeenshire Council had asked community councils for their views on areas to be developed (and areas *not* to be developed), and the closing date for receipt of this information had been 4th February, however Stephen had agreed an extension to the deadline to 13th February.

Stephen Johnson then re-stated for purposes of clarification that the Community Council had until 13th February to give its views. **Keith MacRae** added that at this stage the submission to be made by the Community Council would be to draw attention to areas which the community did or did not consider should be included in the forthcoming Development Plans. This would not be an opportunity to comment on specific proposals which had been submitted by other parties.

Stephen Hall stated that in the past the position of the Community Council had been broadly supportive of small-scale developments in the countryside, on both brown and green-field sites. **Stephen Johnson** noted that the Draft Structure Plan had defined a *regeneration priority area along a coastal corridor* where development would be encouraged on brown-field sites, and that this may include the Catterline area, however there was a lack of clarity about exactly where it is and what it involves.

Stephen Johnson asked the meeting if there would be merit in taking a 'for or against' vote on peoples' views on developments in the area. **Keith MacRae** emphasised that there would be significant difference between building one or two houses versus the building of 20 or 200, which should be taken into account. He added that the current planning arrangements had enabled significant development in Catterline over the past 20 years, and that in terms of new building, the area had by no means remained stagnant. **Susan MacRae** suggested that the status quo was relatively safe as it enabled individual proposals to be considered on their own merit, and would not necessarily prevent construction of new buildings which were sympathetic to their surroundings. However **David Argo** noted that in his view the (Aberdeenshire) Council did not favour small or individual developments in the countryside, but rather preferred larger 'clumps' of buildings which would be easier to service with roads and utilities. **Keith MacRae** suggested that any arguments made about the need for more building to take place in order to sustain Catterline School may be spurious. There were no guarantees that people moving into new homes would have children, nor, if they did, would they be under any compulsion to send them to the local school. **Ceri Webster** noted that the catchment for Catterline School extended far beyond the village itself, and included outlying areas such as Barras. **Robert Adamson** noted that issues of infrastructure strongly dissuaded further development in the village.

Byron McKibben focused on the area known as The Reath, which he described as an area of outstanding and unspoilt beauty with views to Todhead lighthouse to the south which he considered should under no circumstances be subject to development of any kind. He asked if those present supported this view, and a vote was taken which confirmed unanimously that all present considered that The Reath should not be considered for development.

Keith MacRae asked the members of the Community Council whether it would be essential for the Community Council's submission to include suggestions as to areas where the community would support new building. **Stephen Hall** stated that it would prefer to be able to do so if possible. **Douglas Mowatt**, noting that the area covered by the Community Council extended to both Dunottar and Kinneff as well as Catterline, enquired as to whether there would be equivalent consultation meetings taking place in those places, but at that time this was uncertain.

Ann Steed noted that the risk of identifying places where new building might be considered, was that under similar circumstances in the past, such areas had very rapidly been filled with houses. **Susan MacRae** stated that the *conservation area* status had been awarded to Catterline because of the relatively unspoilt nature of the village. In her view the status quo, which would allow for the possibility of sporadic, brown-field development, but not for larger-scale new developments, was an important safeguard to the unspoilt nature of the village. **Stephen Hall** and **Stephen Johnson** were keen to be clear about the status of the term *conservation area*, and it was suggested that rather than affording any significant degree of protection against unwanted development, *conservation area* status may simply require that new developments 'do not detract from the character' of an area. (It was noted that this may be open to a wide range of interpretations).

Ceri Webster described feeling a sense of responsibility for the stewardship of Catterline, and asked if the community should send a strong message that new development would not be welcome. **Keith MacRae** suggested that this could be achieved by ensuring that the community council's response noted that residents did not want new developments in the fields which had been identified for development by local landowners or developers.

The issue of *affordable housing* was raised, and **David Argo** noted that new development proposals insisted on 25% of new houses being in this category.

Derek Robertson noted that in the length of the coastline between Dundee in the South and Inverness to the North, Catterline is unique in retaining its character as a small village. His view was that whilst 4 or 5 new houses might not make a vast difference to this, larger numbers would have a significant detrimental effect, resulting in a loss of the unique and treasured character possessed by Catterline.

Byron McKibben noted that the existing *conservation area* did not include Roadside of Catterline, Roadside of Kinneff, nor the Mill of Uras. **Keith MacRae** asked if those present at the meeting would provide a message about the whole of the *conservation area*, and a vote was taken on the issue of 'no development within the *conservation area*'. This was carried by majority (one person did not vote in favour).

Susan MacRae asked if a minute of the meeting could accompany the submission provided by the community council to Aberdeenshire Council, and this was agreed by **Stephen Hall**. Lynne Fraser returned to the issue of the (westerly) boundary of the *conservation area* (A92), and asked that those present might give consideration to the prospect of development taking place outside the *conservation area*. **Byron McKibben** thought that in these places, some small developments might be fine, but that large developments should be discouraged. **Keith MacRae** acknowledged that there would be a need to maintain a balance, and his view was that the system

currently in place made it perfectly possible to consider the merits of new developments as, when and if they emerge. **Stephen Johnson** asked whether further action, (other than the Community Council submitting its suggestions), would be necessary at this stage, and **Stephen Hall** thought not. **Ceri Webster** wondered whether further submissions from landowners or prospective developers may yet appear, to which **Stephen Hall** said that he was unsure, however **David Argo** understood no more submissions would be made, as 15th January had been the final deadline.

David Evans asked if it might be possible to get a clear picture of the views of those present by voting on the other two areas in Catterline that had been suggested for development, in the way that the meeting had already voted on the proposal to build houses on The Reath. **Simon Horne** said that he would be happy to vote for the status quo, which enabled some small-scale development. **Keith MacRae** asked for clarification of what was wanted by the (Aberdeenshire) Council. **Byron McKibben** asked those participating in the meeting to vote for or against development of the land opposite *Burnside*, the response to which was a show of hands which indicated a very large majority against. A similar vote was then taken with regard to the land adjacent to the houses at Trelong, and again a large majority was not in favour of development there.

Derek Robertson asked whether examples of 'good' developments that had been identified by those present earlier in the discussion, (such as those at Catterline Grove and new buildings at Uras), had been on brown or green-field sites. Several people responded by confirming that these had been brown field sites. **David Evans** asked whether it was necessary at this stage to provide information as to *why* the community council was giving a message in favour or against development in particular areas. **Stephen Hall** stated that at this stage, reasons were not being sought, rather, the (Aberdeenshire) Council simply wanted messages about support or opposition to development where it was apparent that there are strong views one way or the other in the community. **Stephen Johnson** said that he had located the criteria against which submissions were to be judged, and asked those present to consider these, both in the context of a joint (community) response, and in peoples' individual contributions to the consultation (*meaning at the stage when the consultation is ongoing rather than now*). **Sarah Jones** asked for clarification of the status of proposals in May, and **Ceri Webster** asked whether it was incumbent upon the Community Council to represent the views of those present at this meeting. **John Carr** replied that it as not, but that this would be conveyed as the *feeling of the meeting*. **Kate Mackie** asked if a smaller group could be convened to take this forward, and **Stephen Johnson** said that he was part of a smaller group that had been identified at the Community Council meeting the previous week, with a view to circulating relevant material more widely so that people would be adequately prepared to contribute to the consultation. **Ceri Webster** suggested that Keith MacRae should be part of this sub-group, and **Stephen Johnson** and **Keith MacRae** agreed to this. **Lynn Fraser** enquired as to whether members of the community at Dunottar or Kinneff had organised groups to make representations about places local to them which they considered should or should not be subject to development. It appeared that this was not the case. **Byron McKibben** thought that some areas would be obvious candidates for protection against development, but acknowledged that this could not be taken for granted. **Alan Searle** highlighted the Auld Kirk at Kinneff, Dunnottar Castle and the War Memorial as being 'obvious' places where development should not be encouraged. **Susan MacRae** asked whether the Community Council had a duty to consult with the residents of Kinneff and Dunnottar, and **John Carr** replied that there was no obligation for it to do so. In the light of this, **Keith MacRae** wondered how the Community Council would have responded had this meeting not taken place.

Stephen Hall replied that it would probably have recommended that the status quo should be retained, however he reminded those present that Community Council meetings were always open. **Simon Horne** asked whether the Community Council is likely to identify any areas in which they would like developments to take place. **Byron McKibben** asked if those present had thoughts to add in relation to the wider area covered by the Community Council. **Stephen Hall** stated that it might be a good idea to lodge any objections to developments now, because they may appear on future plans. **John Carr** invited comments on a site identified for the construction of a supermarket near Stonehaven. **Susan MacRae** asked whether a specific supermarket chain had submitted plans, and Stephen Hall said that he understood that a specific developer had done so. **Stephen Johnson** asked whether there was a sense that the people of Stonehaven wanted a new supermarket, to which **John Carr** replied that the supermarkets themselves considered that there would be demand. **Robert Adamson** thought that the building of supermarkets outside towns was now considered a regressive move. **John Carr** thought that a possible alternative to adding developments to existing communities would be for the (Community Councils) to recommend that a new town should be developed, possibly in the vicinity of Banchory-Devenick. **Stephen Johnson** asked if the Community Council was asking those present to take a vote on that. **Susan MacRae** recalled a large consultation (relating to a supermarket in Stonehaven?) in the past, and **Robert Adamson** made reference to an abortive attempt by Tesco to build a supermarket in recent years.

Stephen Johnson introduced **Eric Wells** to those present, as an expert on renewable energy, suggesting that he could advise on the potential to seek 100% funding for a feasibility study for renewable energy in Catterline. **Eric Wells** said that in his view Catterline had significant potential for reducing its carbon footprint given its natural assets such as the burn, exposure to the wind, sea power (wave and tide) and solar energy. He said that The Climate Challenge Fund has £27 million to look into community-led projects, and that he believed that in addition to 100% of the funding for a feasibility study (from this fund), other significant grant aid may be available from a range of other sources. This could mean that 60-80% of the capital costs of establishing 'green' energy sources might be identified from public funds. **Lynne Fraser** asked if this support extended only to 'generation' projects, or whether it might also apply to energy conservation measures, such as improved insulation. **David Argo** warned that he had experience of a consultant being paid to look at green energy options in his farm, however the experience had not been positive because the consultant had come up with 'rubbish'. **Eric Wells** said that to qualify for funding a feasibility study, a bid needed to be community-led, and submitted via a legally constituted body. **Stephen Johnson** asked, with this in mind, if there might be grounds to constitute a community trust. In such circumstances it might also be possible to lodge an expression of interest in the community buying land, under the terms of the Land Reform Act. For example, the community might consider buying The Reath, and using the land for ground source heating. **Keith MacRae** suggested that this might be best discussed in a separate community meeting, and **Kate Mackie** offered that if such a meeting were to be convened, she has contact with someone with considerable experience of establishing a community enterprise, and would be willing to arrange for them to talk. At this point the meeting was wound up.